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UNEMPLOYED WORKERS, 'ENFORCED LEISURE' AND EDUCATION FOR 'THE RIGHT USE OF LEISURE' IN BRITAIN IN THE 1930s

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This article examines the views of those who regarded the unemployment of the 1930s not solely as a disaster, but as a liberating new form of leisure for workers, provided that they could make the 'right use' of this leisure. This was an urgent challenge for more and more workers would soon be faced by 'a vast surplus of leisure time' made possible by technological change. The solution was to use the voluntary adult education movement to guide workers towards this 'right use'. The problem was that the grants which the government and charitable trusts made available to the voluntary sector were too small for the task and, more fundamentally, the analysis was misconceived and contradictory. But these opinions did serve to reinforce the case against public works, and legitimised a continuing desire to supervise working-class life on the part of the state and its partners in the voluntary sector.

'Unemployment, as enforced leisure, remains one of the great uncharted territories of the social historian', wrote Professor Jeffrey Hill some years ago.¹ Unqualified, the statement is perhaps misleading. There are important studies of the varied time-use of the unemployed in the 1930s as well as more recently,² and some suggestive remarks about the enforced leisure of the unemployed by Stephen Jones in his pioneering work.³ There have also been careful attempts to define the cultural significance of 'leisure' for individuals and its subordinate relationship to 'work'.⁴ One aspect has remained rather unjustly neglected: the ideological drive, principally in the 1930s and by other classes, to re-define the significance of unemployment for the working class. It was to be regarded not simply as the loss of work, but, under the right circumstances, as a new and fulfilling form of leisure. A *Punch* cartoon was being ironic when it described two unemployed workers in 1919 as 'gentlemen of leisure';⁵ but, by the 1930s, the idea of the unemployed as a 'leisured class' was taken at face-value by many. Moreover, government ministers, MPs, trade unions, professional bodies, voluntary organizations, the clergy, academics, writers,

journalists and broadcasters routinely regarded the unemployed as merely the advance guard of an ever increasing number of workers who would be faced with a 'vast surplus of leisure time' made possible by mechanisation or greater efficiency under capitalism.⁶ That all workers would eventually be affected meant that the challenge of leisure exercised commentators even in the different circumstances of the 1940s.

This inevitable development potentially posed a serious danger to the political and cultural life of the nation. Concerns were expressed that the social psychological consequences of 'enforced leisure' would undermine the cohesion and stability of existing communities, prevent the growth of new 'communities' on new housing developments, enhance the appeal of 'totalitarianism' movements and threaten Britain's unique parliamentary democracy. The sincerity of these concerns might be questioned. If senior politicians and the public had entertained real fears about the unemployed, repressive public order measures might have been expected. As it was, governments mainly saw hunger marchers as a threat to public order and made extensive use of the police against them.⁷ What underpinned expressions of concern about the new form of leisure was a more long-standing and familiar ambivalence on the part of much of the middle and upper classes — sometimes explicit, nearly always implicit to some degree — about the fitness for citizenship of the working class generally.

The danger could be avoided, however, by extending adult education among the unemployed in order to equip them to make the 'right use of leisure', which would prove personally fulfilling and socially beneficial. The National Government strongly encouraged, by its rhetoric and with grants, the voluntary sector to develop appropriate institutions and activities. But the objective was continually being undermined from two directions: materially, by the lack of resources made available by the government and charitable trusts; and, ideologically, by the conventional wisdom that unemployment produced apathy and by the very lack of confidence of many about the working-class citizens. The effective abandonment of this approach by 1952 indicated the vulnerability of a largely ideological construction to material realities.

This article seeks to chart three main features of this territory. The first is the range of opinion about the psychological impact of unemployment and the predominant view that the unemployed would become and remain apathetic. This was at once reassuring and undermining: it implied that the unemployed could not be stirred to social disruption; but neither could they be steered to using their time for educational purposes. The second is the debate about the coming shift from work to 'leisure' which coincided with the shift from cohesive communities to an unstable 'mass society'. Technological change would make unemployment the normal lot of labour and therefore the fundamental task was not to create jobs but to develop personally satisfying and socially harmless alternatives to work. It therefore lent credibility to educational activities pioneered by voluntary organizations. The third is the attitude of these voluntary bodies to the unemployed, their relationship with the government and the attitudes of the unemployed to them.⁸ The voluntary sector and the government typically assessed the effectiveness of the diverse collections of clubs, centres and educational settlements which sprang up by reference to a handful of schemes assumed to be models of excellence. The article will also explore the range of criticisms and defences of clubs, centres and educational settlements. The unemployed were less sanguine. This outlook continued into the 1940s, as did the failure of the voluntary sector to command adequate resources.

The article suggests a rather different emphasis in thinking about leisure: instead of concentrating on its meaning for individuals, it should also be regarded as a contestable term of political debate denoting a political and social danger which needs to be contained. It also points to a wider context in which to understand the defence of free-market capitalism in the 1930s, and the element of utopianism which accompanied its defence. Much has been written about government economic policies, defences of neo-classical economics and the responses of employers and trade unionists.⁹ The ideological construction of a coming age of leisure reinterpreted mass unemployment not as a fundamental failing of the capitalist system, but as an inescapable transition to a way of life as rewarding as the one to which there was no return. There was no alternative. However, the ideological construction of the necessity for a 'right use' of leisure justified a continuing surveillance and evaluation of the tastes and behaviour of the working class: the discipline of work would be replaced by an equivalent discipline of leisure. The overall effect of opinions circulating through various media is a cacophony: it is rarely possible to identify a hegemonic ideology. There were people in the 1930s who questioned all or some elements of this analysis of unemployment, not least the workers themselves. Their experience was not one of greater leisure. Many of those who remained in work between the Wars, especially in the declining sectors of cotton, coal, heavy engineering and shipbuilding, were powerless to resist the imposition of work intensification and longer hours by employers.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the supposed opportunity afforded by 'enforced leisure' to unspecified numbers of workers was one aspect of the ideological climate of the 1930s which allowed the National Government to prosper in an era of mass unemployment. In the 1940s the provision of 'education for leisure' by the voluntary sector reflected a belief that employed workers would still require supervision out of work.

I

Public debate on the social and psychological impact of unemployment in the 1930s was divided between those who saw it provoking public disorder or even revolution and those who supposed it left the unemployed apathetic. These two claims were not always regarded as mutually exclusive: apathy might undermine democratic vigour, while the example of successful action might stir the apathetic. Nevertheless, the near universal acceptance of the authority of the 'stages theory' meant that most commentators saw the unemployed becoming and remaining apathetic. As summarised by Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld in 1935, the theory proposed that the unemployed would pass through four basic stages: 'the unbroken', 'the resigned', 'the distressed' and 'the apathetic'. The authors clearly identified these stages in the fifty-seven autobiographies of unemployed Polish men that they reviewed — 'a fact indicating that these basic conceptions are sound.'¹¹ Moreover, the stages corresponded exactly to those that Lazarsfeld, Jahoda and Zeisel had found in their famous study of the Austrian textile village of Marienthal in 1933. There the 'apathetic' stage was characterized by 'complete passivity, the absence of any effort': 'Home and children are dirty and neglected, the mental outlook is not desperate but simply indifferent. No plans are made, no hopes maintained.'¹²

This theory, in its full form or in more popular abbreviated variants, was immensely influential in Britain. Its success was partly due to the fact that, in McKibbin's words, 'it was the plain man's view and seemed to cohere with experience';¹³ partly because it continued to receive empirical validation;¹⁴ and partly because it was reassuring — at least in some, but by no means all, respects — about the lack of political threat from the unemployed. It dominated academic and social service circles. So, for example, in 1934 Beales and Lambert's introduction to their collection of memoirs by the unemployed reported that numerous studies suggested that there was 'a rough progression from optimism to pessimism, from pessimism to fatalism' among the unemployed.¹⁵ The Director of the Scottish Division of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology employed the stages theory when writing about the psychological problems of a depressed area in 1936.¹⁶ The Pilgrim Trust's influential report, *Men Without Work*, written with assistance from the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), the most important body co-ordinating philanthropic action, endorsed Dr J. L. Halliday's view that unemployment led first to a short period of release, then 'gradually anxiety and depression set in with loss of mental equilibrium, and finally after several years, adaptation takes place to a new and debased level of life, lacking hope as well as fear of the future.'¹⁷ Even so, reviewing the report, Henry Mess, Reader in Sociology in the University of London and a former Director of the Tyneside Council of Social Service, argued that its authors had a rather superficial view of unemployed men's clubs because they did not have 'any adequate conception of the deadly lethargy which prevailed in the worst hit areas'.¹⁸

The image of the apathetic unemployed also had a powerful hold on politicians, journalists and writers, in part because the extent and length of unemployment meant that it was no longer credible to maintain that the unemployed were simply 'work-shy'. As Orwell observed in 1937, the middle classes, 'even the bridge clubs in the country towns', were beginning to realise that there was such a thing as unemployment, and the view that 'They don't *want* to work, that's all it is!' was 'growing perceptibly less frequent'.¹⁹ For Orwell, there was 'no doubt about the deadening, debilitating effect of unemployment upon everybody [...]. The best intellects will not stand up against it'.²⁰ The novelist Walter Greenwood thought unemployment 'got you slowly, with the slippery stealth of an unsuspected, malignant disease'.²¹ When S. P. B. Mais, the journalist, broadcaster, novelist and former leader-writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, first arrived in Brynmawr, 'it certainly didn't look good. I went into the church institute. Four young men were lying on the billiard-table'.²² In the conservative T. S. Eliot's *Choruses From 'The Rock'*, the Voices of the Unemployed intone, 'No man has hired us | With pocketed hands | And lowered faces | We stand about in open places'.²³ For Stephen Spender on the left, the unemployed were likewise men 'Who stand behind dull cigarettes, | Those men who idle in the road', and 'They lounge at corners of the street | And greet friends with a shrug of shoulder'.²⁴

The examples could be multiplied. By contrast, few voices explicitly challenged the stages theory, and usually with less authority. The Save the Children Fund's investigation in 1933 concluded that it was impossible to generalise about the psychological effects: 'in the main it must be the case that as there are infinite varieties of human nature, so there are infinite varieties in the reactions of the unemployed to lack of work.'²⁵ J. B. Priestley qualified his view of the state of mind of the unemployed: he accepted that the environment of the east Durham miners 'must either bring them to despair — as I know from my own experience that it frequently does — or in the end it must blunt their senses

and taste, harden the feelings and cloud the mind'.²⁶ But he also cautioned that sympathy was wasted on the young unemployed for 'unlike older men, who had known what steady employment and regular wages were, these youngsters did not "fret" because they had no work. There was no loss of self-respect, no anxiety, with them [...]. They lived below the level of worry'.²⁷ Moreover, unemployed workers given a public platform often offered a different or a more nuanced insight. An 'Unemployed Man', who reviewed *Memoirs of the Unemployed* for *The Spectator*, suggested that prolonged unemployment tended to split the workless into roughly three camps: 'the indifferent fatalists'; 'the revolutionaries'; and 'the cyclothymics', who oscillated between 'optimism, pessimism and revolutionarism'.²⁸ An unemployed Durham miner told a social service conference that 'The inevitable and deadly result of unemployment is apathy. This is general. It is mitigated to some extent if a man has a hobby. But some men have no hobby'.²⁹

The combination of expertise and common sense which appeared to validate the stages theory was reinforced by its aura of political neutrality. There were, of course, many more colourful assessments from a variety of quarters. In 1933, Harry Pollitt, the secretary of the British Communist Party, reaffirmed the Marxist theory of the mass impoverishment and consequent revolutionary mobilization of the working class, despite the treachery of Labour leaders who 'have attempted to corrupt the working class by theories of a special type of "British" Socialism'.³⁰ Bourgeois press reports condemned 'Little Moscovs' for the 'red reign of terror' which prevailed in them,³¹ whereas for Communists they were proof of the revolutionary mobilisation of the unemployed, even in the teeth of the 'increasingly Fascist character' of the National Government.³² Non-communist writers too, when it seemed opportune to do so, liked to give credence to the view that 'Nowhere does the Communist find such easy converts as among the ranks of those poor unfortunates who for months or years have been unable to find work';³³ and that communism, like unemployment, was found among 'people living in slum conditions'.³⁴ John Newsom, who dedicated his investigation of the lives of the unemployed in County Durham to Sir Wyndham Deedes of the NCSS, thought that on hearing the word 'unemployed', 'we conjure up a picture of sullen figure in cap and choker brooding seditious'.³⁵ But such views were easily dismissed as blatantly partisan or knowingly disregarded as conventional airy rhetoric.

Academic research, not least by supporters of the stages theory, dismissed the idea that the unemployed were turning to extremist parties. The American sociologist E. W. Bakke, for example, found that in Greenwich, with the exception of a very small group of skilled men at whom the Communists directed much of their publicity and appeals, there was no difference between the political attitudes of employed and unemployed workers.³⁶ More importantly, perhaps, public opinion often imagined the unemployed in terms of national or regional stereotypes which emphasised the fortitude and patriotism of the working man. The right-wing journalist and novelist Sir Philip Gibbs wrote in 1937 that 'Even the inhabitants of the Distressed Areas are marvellously patient and untouched by revolutionary bitterness, though they have been given too little aid beyond the dole'.³⁷

The British working man, employed or unemployed, is very conservative in his allegiance to law, order and tradition. He hates the idea of Red Revolution, which he knows would make an awful mess [...]. Communist visitors in the distressed areas get short shrift from men standing unemployed round disused pit-heads.³⁸

In 1946, Gibbs recalled going to the 'stricken North' where he met the unemployed in the distressed areas and was 'deeply touched by their character and courage of outlook' and their tolerance in believing that 'perhaps it's nobody's fault'.³⁹ From the moderate left, William Temple, the Archbishop of York, characterized the people of County Durham in 1936 as 'so brave in face of their sufferings, so ready to benefit by opportunities provided';⁴⁰ and the founder of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Albert Mansbridge, wrote that the 'tolerant comprehension of the other man's difficulties and limitations' of the English workman would be 'an important factor in the avoidance of serious conflict'.⁴¹

Although the idea of the unemployed representing an imminent political danger could easily be discounted, unemployment could still be seen as highly disruptive in producing what Beales and Lambert termed a 'psycho-pathology of human communities'.⁴² The evidence, however, was mixed. Thus Beales and Lambert cited evidence that increased mental illness and crime was caused by unemployment.⁴³ John Newsom reported continuous depression and 'disintegrating changes' among the unemployed of the Durham coalfield.⁴⁴ Others thought that unemployment produced gambling 'as certainly as night follows day'.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Bakke found in Greenwich that the unemployed only tolerated the illegal methods of other men.⁴⁶ An investigation in 1933 by the Save the Children Fund into the effects of unemployment on children concluded that very few places reported an increase in juvenile crime and those that did attributed it to the cinema rather than to unemployment.⁴⁷

There was perhaps less resistance to the idea that prolonged unemployment was causing the disintegration of previously solid local communities, especially in the 'distressed areas'. However, in some respects this idea followed from the stages theory and was often predicted by its proponents. It also seemed intuitively true, and there was often little reliable knowledge of such remote areas to produce a more nuanced account. As J. B. Priestley observed in the course of his English journey in the autumn of 1933, 'But who knows East Durham? The answer is — nobody but the people who have to live and work there, and a few others who go there on business'.⁴⁸ The result was that whereas historians now emphasize the existence of relatively prosperous sub-regions within the north east,⁴⁹ contemporaries tended to imagine a much more uniform landscape of dereliction, such as Thomas Sharp's description of the six small 'towns' of the south-west Durham coalfield:

They are just long straggling collections of streets: bare featureless streets of grim little houses. A few shops, one or two rather seedy cinemas, a score of pubs, half a dozen chapels, and an Urban District Council constitute the sum of their civic amenities.⁵⁰

Physical dereliction was often simply assumed to be matched by social disintegration. But *Men Without Work*, which regarded the Rhondda and Crook as examples of a 'working-class civilisation of the older type', based on the solidarities of neighbourliness, trade unionism and co-operation, found that these institutions no longer had the same hold on the younger generation there.⁵¹ A. D. K. Owen too noted that the membership of some miners' lodges in County Durham had been almost completely wiped out as a result of transference.⁵² Such solidarities, it was believed, had been rooted in the noted independence of the Durham pitman; but in 1936 a local unemployed man thought that

this independence was 'going now'.⁵³ As well as transference the means test, and the brute facts of poverty and ill health among the unemployed, were identified as the causes of this disintegration.⁵⁴ Authoritative official voices emphasized the worrying uniformity of social outlook throughout entire regions. In his report on Durham and Tyneside for the Ministry of Labour in 1934, Euan Wallace, Conservative MP for Hornsey, stated that it was impracticable to isolate certain parts of the region for 'The psychological effects of depression are not confined to particular spots, but permeate the whole region.'⁵⁵

II

What was it that the unemployed had in place of work? Sometimes they were just 'people with time on their hands.'⁵⁶ The title of a book reprinting broadcast lectures by eleven unemployed in 1935 was *Time To Spare*.⁵⁷ Another very common answer, however, was that the unemployed had leisure. Beales and Lambert wrote of the unemployed man's 'enforced leisure'.⁵⁸ Mais observed how the unemployed of Brynmawr occupied their 'enforced leisure'.⁵⁹ The WEA wrote of unemployment resulting in 'the creation of leisure'.⁶⁰ Wondering why unemployed men with genuine literary talent did not sit down and write books, Orwell observed that they 'have all the leisure in the world'.⁶¹ Some working men themselves also thought of unemployment as 'forced leisure'.⁶²

Moreover, many shared the Pilgrim Trust's concern about the danger of an 'unemployed class' being created,⁶³ with many of the older, long-term unemployed never working again. The conclusion seemed inevitable for the special areas, as evidence mounted of the failure of employment policies. The Trust found that in south-west Durham 'the main effects of transference stop short about the age of 28 or 30', which made unemployment 'most intractable' among family men and the upper age groups.⁶⁴ Trading estates, even in the later 1930s, were making very little impact and S. R. Dennison concluded that the Special Areas policy was 'not yet beyond the first stages of experiment'.⁶⁵ The Report on South-West Durham to the Commissioner for the Special Areas by an independent firm of experts in 1936 made a dramatic proposal: 'the only real solution for such an area is liquidation.'⁶⁶ However, there was resistance to this from local people who insisted on the viability of their communities.⁶⁷ Dennison doubted both its desirability, since 'some form of compulsion would be essential, even if agreement about the details of the policy could be reached', and its practicality, for many men had been 'unemployed for too long a period and are also too old to be of high employment value [...]. Many have probably adjusted their lives to permanent unemployment.'⁶⁸ Dennison's alternative suggestion was that the workers who were not suitable for transfer should be offered 'palliative' measures such as land settlement or subsistence production.⁶⁹ However, the outlook for these schemes was no more encouraging.⁷⁰ Significantly, Dennison allowed himself to observe in the course of his careful scholarly review:

In a society in which unemployment seems to be inevitably associated with economic change, it is not entirely fanciful to suggest that those who are now the victims of such change should be regarded as a new type of leisured class, potential contributors to the society's well-being in ways other than the following of their former occupations.⁷¹

The view of unemployment as a new form of leisure did not go unchallenged. Most powerfully, Henry Durant rejected the analysis of the life of the unemployed in terms of leisure, 'which is so often made', since to talk of the unemployed man having leisure was to 'mistake the desert created by the absence of work for the oasis of recreation'. He quoted Mess's observation that 'The leisure of the unemployed is not normal leisure but tormented leisure'.⁷² The Marienthal study had shown that 'being unemployed is something very different from having leisure time'.⁷³ *Men Without Work* noted that for the majority of skilled and semi-skilled workers 'their lives had been wholly centred in their employment'.⁷⁴ No doubt most commentators, if pushed, would have recognized this as obvious; but its implications were more often than not ignored by those who insisted on treating unemployment as a form of leisure.

There was, however, another powerful reason why equating unemployment with leisure struck commentators as plausible. The speed and scope of mechanisation in the 1920s suggested a near future in which more and more workers would suffer permanent technological unemployment and form a new 'leisured class'. L. P. Jacks, Stevenson Lecturer on Citizenship in the University of Edinburgh in 1926, foresaw a time when displacement would get ahead of absorption in the mechanical age, whereupon societies would be threatened with 'a surplus of time such as the world has not had before, and of which the present phenomenon of unemployment is a foretaste'.⁷⁵ In 1936 Havelock Ellis predicted in his newspaper column that an acute problem would soon become chronic:

We already hear of the four-hour working day as the probable maximum for the future. The day of the proletariat is over. Few workers but skilled ones are now needed. Most of the unemployed of today will perhaps never be employed again. They already belong to an age that is past.⁷⁶

He therefore believed that 'The small "leisured class" is now as often as not a working-class. The huge working-class has unexpectedly become a leisured class'.⁷⁷ Gibbs wrote that the mechanization of labour was 'driving men in masses out of the factories and out of the fields. It is idle to pretend, as do the protagonists of machine power, that these masses of men may find other work to do, adding to the world's store of wealth and creating an increased demand for manufactured goods'.⁷⁸ Greenwood despised the 'human degradation' he observed in a huge, regimented automobile factory where men feared for their jobs;⁷⁹ but his fictional working man, Harry Hardcastle, reasoned that even if trade did improve 'in some mysterious fashion', newer machinery would continue to keep a generation of men out of work.⁸⁰ Moreover, this was not simply a matter of mechanization: the outcome would be the same if production came to be more efficiently organized. The Communist Party's chief theoretician, Palme Dutt, cited the industrialist Lord Leverhulme's estimate that if productivity were efficiently organised, a half-hour's work per week by every citizen would provide a minimum standard for all and one hour's work per week 'an overwhelming abundance'.⁸¹

The logic of capitalism would produce a super-abundance of leisure. Most writers relied upon their intuition rather than a marshalling of facts to reach this conclusion. Reviewing the available facts, Dennison found that, as a field of inquiry, the effects of mechanization was 'almost untouched', though 'some scraps of evidence' supported an American finding that mechanization tended to displace unskilled labour while the

demand for skilled labour was 'not seriously affected'.⁸² However, in the absence of conclusive evidence, those for whom these issues mattered accepted the conventional wisdom. In 1935, for example, the TUC considered that it should pay 'very great attention' to the problem of increased leisure, which would 'unquestionably arrive for all workers, perhaps sooner than many people anticipated'.⁸³

The urgency about addressing 'the problem of leisure' also arose from a pervasive anxiety about the dangers of mass-produced opinions and from a lack of confidence in the capacity of an apathetic 'unemployed class' — and the working class in general⁸⁴ — to make 'the right use of leisure'. Jacks expressed the anxiety about leisure most forcefully when he stated that 'For this vast surplus of leisure time we are not prepared either biologically or by education'.⁸⁵ Work disciplined workers; leisure left them potentially fatally vulnerable to influences which could destroy society; unemployment left them vulnerable to the same influences and potentially unable to be motivated into combating them. Yet the stakes were high over these matters in the 1930s since there was wide agreement that communism and fascism — both varieties of 'totalitarianism' — were products of mass society. Gibbs, for example, observed that 'every tendency in the modern world' was favourable to regimentation, but 'what is more dangerous to the individual soul is that thoughts may be mass-produced on a rather low-grade type'.⁸⁶ Even if the political system was not endangered in the first instance, the increasing influence of the machine, mass-production and standardisation, that is 'mass civilisation', caused 'the so much more desperate plight of culture today', leaving the masses more than ever incapable of 'the discerning appreciation of art and literature'.⁸⁷

Proposals of varying degrees of plausibility emerged to contain mass society and make leisure safe in a democracy. For Communists there was 'clearly one final solution only': revolutionary change to enable the fullest use of the technical achievements of mankind for its service;⁸⁸ and 'the creation of a new type of man' in a Soviet Britain.⁸⁹ From the right Gibbs looked in Wellsian fashion to the emergence of a 'new aristocracy of intelligence which has no distinctions of rank and no common code of fellowship'.⁹⁰ Ellis wanted a Ministry of Leisure.⁹¹ What most proposals amounted to, however, was an insistence that the working class had to be taught to make a socially constructive use of their ever increasing leisure, and the unemployed of their 'enforced leisure': the use of the phrases 'the right use of leisure' and 'education for leisure' was almost universal in the debates of the 1930s.⁹²

Instead of passive commercialized leisure, workers and the unemployed had to study and participate in cultural and communal affairs if they were to be responsible democratic citizens. F. R. Leavis wanted to train working people to have a critical awareness of topics such as advertising, the use of leisure, tradition, substitute-living and education through adult education, debating societies and study circles and 'the general reader'.⁹³ The New Education Fellowship publicized the view that education had to become 'an adventure continued throughout life', if the increase in leisure was to mean 'an advance in civilisation'.⁹⁴ Ellis demonstrated the equivocation about the capacities of workers even among those who were well disposed towards them. He wrote that 'mentally as well as physically' passive enjoyments such as sport, gambling or the cinema were 'the inevitable recreations of a working class actively absorbed in labour'; but that 'under the new conditions they are seeming less satisfactory [...]. The worker, no longer forced to think about his own immediate work, is free to think about larger problems'. Contrary

to the Marienthal findings, he even believed that there was a great thirst for books among the unemployed. And yet he still characterized manual workers as not knowing how to use their leisure.⁹⁵

T. S. Eliot's was one of the few who spoke out against the fallacy of 'education for leisure'. He argued that a system of education had meaning only within a particular social system and, in the case of Britain, education for several centuries had been dominated by the idea of 'getting on'. Consequently:

As soon as this precious motive of snobbery evaporates, the zest has gone out of education; if it is not going to mean more money, or more power over others, or a better social position, or at least a steady and respectable job, few people are going to take the trouble to acquire education. For deteriorate it as you may, education is still going to demand a good deal of drudgery. And the majority of people are incapable of enjoying leisure — that is, unemployment plus an income and a status of respectability — in any but pretty simple forms — such as balls propelled by hand, by foot, and by engines or tools of various types; in playing cards; or in watching dogs, horses, or other men engage in feats of speed or skill.⁹⁶

Most commentators, however, thought the attempt to educate workers for leisure worthwhile, though they may have shared something of Eliot's pessimism — or condescension — about them.

The notion seemed practical because there already existed broadly respected adult education bodies with compatible outlooks. In 1925 the British Institute of Adult Education defined the purpose of adult education as 'to produce a mind with impulses and emotions disciplined into a harmonious whole.'⁹⁷ It would create in the 'Common-room' the centre of a 'true community' in which everyone would 'know one another' and 'work together for the common good' without being subjected to the dictates of 'mechanical standardisation'; but also learn 'how to discover the right leaders, and then how to follow them with self-respect, with critical judgement, and in a spirit of disciplined loyalty, which is at bottom true esprit de corps.'⁹⁸ 'Group spirit' was vital, for the Institute promoted a view of the life of the individual as 'an ever-widening circle of loyalties — loyalty to self, to the family, to country, to mankind.'⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly considering their overlapping memberships, the first International Conference of Settlements at Toynbee Hall in 1922 had also defined the business of settlements as creating 'a new type of community life, comprehending all of thought, experience and power of service that every neighbour can bring [...] [and] practising within the limits of the local, self-governing group what it wants to see worked out in the larger fields of city, nation, or world.'¹⁰⁰ Moreover, already in 1922 settlements were preoccupied with the use of leisure, noting that:

It is in leisure that society develops her spiritual qualities, such as honesty, truth, courage, patriotism, together with those interests, tastes, habits, discipline of mind and body, self-mastery and physical vitality on the sure foundation of which it is possible for society to endure, and the absence of which is certain death.¹⁰¹

On several counts, therefore, existing adult education organizations seemed the obvious bodies to deal with the 'enforced leisure' of the unemployed. By 1933 their activities with the unemployed included handicrafts, allotments, athletics, classes, informal discussion circles, drama and experiments with broadcasting and film.¹⁰² Their objective was to provide the unemployed with 'opportunities to develop interests for which they often

have had little time when they are in work';¹⁰³ and through craftwork even to counter-act the destruction of craftsmanship in work.¹⁰⁴ They recognized the dangers of propaganda in adult education.¹⁰⁵ However, they were also committed to ensuring the 'right use of leisure'.

III

The Prime Minister's private secretary Thomas Jones wrote in a letter to a friend on 31 January 1933:

There has been a feeling since the P.M.'s Lossiemouth speech that the Government were trying to fob off the unemployed with a miserable grant of a few thousand pounds to Ellis's show [NCSS].¹⁰⁶

Governments did establish training and instructional centres for men and women.¹⁰⁷ However, they preferred to let voluntary bodies take as much responsibility as possible for the unemployed, and these were pleased to do so. In 1933 A. D. Lindsay, the chairman of the NCSS's Unemployment Committee, wrote anxiously to the Prime Minister seeking assurances that the government did not intend to take over voluntary schemes. MacDonald replied that 'we have no intention of doing anything to impair the voluntary basis on which the work of your Committee is being carried on, and that in dealing with what you call the psychological effects of unemployment, we agree that it is essential to preserve the voluntary character of all that is done.'¹⁰⁸ As the threat of totalitarianism became more pervasive in the later 1930s, the NCSS affirmed that voluntary organization or free association was 'one of the most characteristic forms in which Democracy delights to express itself; and Democracy, in large parts of the world, has been arraigned, tried and found wanting, and its antithesis, the Totalitarian or Omnipotent State, has been substituted for it.'¹⁰⁹ In 1933 the NCSS had information about 1560 voluntary centres involving 250,000 unemployed people, of which 837 provided facilities for some kind of occupation other than games and reading; and in 1936 about 1014 men's occupational clubs and 320 women's clubs.¹¹⁰ By the end of 1935 the NCSS had made grants to over 900 clubs.¹¹¹ The North East gives some indication of the extent of provision in a depressed region: in 1935 there were over 100 clubs for men with a membership of more than 11,000 and almost forty clubs for women; Community Service Councils offered expertise and advice; and Hardwick Hall was opened as a residential centre in October 1934.¹¹²

Adult education bodies too received only modest grant support from governments. The *Final Report* of the special committee on adult education in 1919 had recommended much greater public expenditure and the creation of 'joint committees of education authorities, universities and voluntary bodies'.¹¹³ In 1921 Sidney Webb could still hope that the provision of opportunities for adult education 'in every village of the county [County Durham]' would be a priority.¹¹⁴ The Educational Settlements Association (ESA) and the Federation of Residential Settlements, afterwards the British Association of Residential Settlements (BARS), were both founded in 1920 and benefited from close contacts with the NCSS.¹¹⁵ However, only the ESA was an 'approved association' and included 'responsible bodies' which were able to claim grants from the Board of

Education. Moreover, only a few local education authorities made financial contributions to classes promoted by settlements.¹¹⁶ Even so, in 1926 there were fifty-six settlements affiliated to BARS; and Swarthorne in Leeds, St Mary's in York, Beechcroft in Birkenhead, the Bristol Folkhouse and the Letchworth Adult Education Settlement had achieved some prominence between 1909 and 1925.¹¹⁷

Governments and the voluntary movement found it mutually beneficial to publicize widely and praise lavishly a number of model schemes which proved how effective their strategy was. Any criticism could then be deflected by reference to one of these schemes. Pre-eminent was the Lincoln People's Service Club founded in 1927 which *Men Without Work* described as 'one of the few definitely successful experiments that have been made in dealing with the "residual problem" [of the long-term unemployed].'¹¹⁸ Its founder and resident WEA tutor Alice Cameron based her activities on the belief that 'The right use of unemployment is the key to the future of working-class civilisation.'¹¹⁹ Also nationally known was Maes-Yr-Haf House in Trealaw, also opened in 1927;¹²⁰ the Spennymoor Settlement in south-west Durham, started by the BARS in December 1931, which was dubbed 'the pitmen's academy' after newspapers began covering the annual exhibitions of its sketching club, helped dozens of adults to win scholarships to Oxford and to adult colleges and was accorded the accolade of a visit from the Prince of Wales in December 1934;¹²¹ the WEA Ashington Group of 'pitmen painters' who attracted a wealthy patron and were taken up by London sculptors, curators and the BBC;¹²² and the Dowlais Social Centre, started in 1935.¹²³ In 1933 the British Institute of Adult Education listed the Clydebank Mutual Service Association, the League of Service in Pontypool, the Llandudno Unemployment Welfare Movement, the Lincoln People's Service Club, the Oxfordshire Scheme and the work in Birmingham as examples of successful schemes;¹²⁴ similar lists were drawn up by other bodies.¹²⁵ Also often commended for integrating the unemployed into their activities were the Pioneer Health Centre in Peckham,¹²⁶ and the Slough Social Centre, which comprised three large buildings connected by covered passageways and a central hall that could hold 1,000 people and was regarded as 'without doubt the most ambitious effort of its kind yet made in Britain.'¹²⁷ Appeals such as the National Book Appeal for the Unemployed, which produced 100,000 books issued to around 300 centres in 1936,¹²⁸ or the Hertfordshire Appeal for County Durham¹²⁹ received favourable publicity.

These national schemes were cited time and again to defend existing policy; but at the regional level, too, certain local schemes emerged as further models of excellence which could reinforce the national message. In the North East, for example, Priestley was impressed by the theatre and classes of the Bensham Grove Settlement and thought that the Seaham Harbour Settlement was 'particularly good'.¹³⁰ *Men Without Work* praised the 'extraordinary progress' of drama among the unemployed clubs on Tyneside.¹³¹ These schemes — and the exemplary leadership of the warden at Seaham Harbour, Lettice Jowitt JP, and the Farrells at Spennymoor — were highlighted when voluntary work for the unemployed was under attack in the region.

In debates about the effectiveness of voluntary adult education work, therefore, supporters had a powerful defence to hand, which was reinforced by the fact that some published opinions of unemployed working men were favourable. A Rhondda miner who had been unemployed for seven years and had attended an educational settlement for a year, wrote:

In the beginning suspicion arose, many people thinking that the clubs were dope on the one hand, and injurious to industry on the other, but neither is right. The clubs are really helpful.¹³²

There was a good deal of questioning of its effectiveness from within the voluntary movement itself. However, it usually centred on only two issues: the inadequacy of premises; and the most appropriate management structure. Viscount Bledisloe, the President of the NCSS, believed that what the clubs chiefly wanted by 1936 were better premises.¹³³ In many places this was obviously true: the Spennymoor Settlement, for example, in its first year consisted of a small shop, a back room and an outhouse. This was supposed to cater for 250 adults and 100 children. This was thought 'shockingly inadequate' and by 1938, with 600 members, it had no room capable of seating half the membership and was appealing for funds to build a new Theatre-Hall.¹³⁴ As regards management, the NCSS stated that the members of a club had to be 'mainly responsible for its internal management and for the selection and conduct of activities.'¹³⁵ This philosophy was fully shared by the settlements: Basil Henriques, the warden of Toynbee Hall, criticized the fact that 'social service is looked upon as "bestowing" and not as "sharing"' and recommended his experience of the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission before 1914, where 'The Oxford man and the Bermondsey man were on a level [...]. There was no "from above to below" about it.'¹³⁶ Priestley for one admired the people attached to settlement houses in the North East, who worked at least twelve hours a day for very little money, and recognized the depth of the problems but without being 'elaborately good to the poor.'¹³⁷

Practice, however, often fell far short of the ideal or of a superficial fleeting impression. The honorary secretary of the Croydon Centre for Unemployed Men noted that in some centres attendance in workshops or classes had been made a condition of membership while in Croydon each unemployed man had to take a compulsory turn of duty in running in the centre to enable him to gain by 'the practice of mutual service.'¹³⁸ W. G. Farrell's account of his first nine months as warden of the Spennymoor Settlement gives a vivid impression of the difficulties of balancing a desire for both democratic self-government and 'the right use of leisure':

There is not an enlightened democracy here, &, generalizing further, I would say most similar places are almost mediaeval in mental outlook, consequently they should be made into small particular areas where authoritarianism, of Government in all matters is the only satisfactory method for preventing the people running themselves. Let me give but one example of what I mean. Some 3 weeks ago the men were rapidly turning the 'Common Room' into something closely resembling a Bar parlour [...] they began to think that the Settlement was a place where they could do just what they liked & nobody could say them nay; they took a dislike to the 'Working Comm.' because the Comm. were enforcing ordinary hygienic rules, & decided that they would elect a new one. They even began to think they could elect a New Warden who would let them do what they liked! Then when I wanted to close the Common Room to all but members of a certain group it was suggested I had no power to do so [...]. I called a meeting & told them very forcibly that the Settlement was not theirs to ruin, that they could not elect & depose the Comm. when they liked, & that I would close the premises just when & to whom I liked & if needs be I would close them for ever! I had to make them understand that I was the sole authority, an autocrat. This amazed them at first but now things are running smoothly & there is no trouble.¹³⁹

For obvious reasons the voluntary movement was reluctant to consider publicly the issue of funding. Nonetheless, it is clear that on the ground there was a constant battle

to secure — and constant anxiety about retaining — funding from the government and the major philanthropic trusts. In the case of the Spennymoor Settlement, the Pilgrim Trust decided at the end of the first five years that it would continue to fund the warden's salary, but maintenance charges would have to be met by applying for grants from the Commissioner for the Special Areas and by private donations.¹⁴⁰ It was argued that the unemployed would value what they paid for or contributed towards. In reality even the charging of a subscription of 1*d.* or 2*d.* a week¹⁴¹ was felt by some to be beyond the means of many of the unemployed. Cameron believed that many unemployed men would refuse to stand at street corners selling flags or holding collecting-boxes to raise money for their clubs since 'It is not the sort of work, if it can be called work at all, which from the study of the psychology of unemployment, can be expected to appeal to them or to help in their return to normal attitudes.'¹⁴² Such funding difficulties were sometimes exacerbated by the obstructive actions of local authorities. In the North East conflicts between local councils were an additional hindrance;¹⁴³ while in Brynmawr, despite the fact that the unemployed had built a nursery school and a public rock garden, the local council was still 'suspicious of voluntary effort'.¹⁴⁴ Even with goodwill, however, low rateable values and the general poverty of ratepayers in the distressed areas severely limited the assistance that local authorities could provide.¹⁴⁵

Critics of the voluntary schemes tended not to question the excellence of the examples supporters seized upon, though there was certainly scope to do so. Rather they either criticised the whole direction of policy or pointed to the inability of clubs, centres and settlements of all kinds to attract and retain significant numbers of the unemployed. In 1933 the communist Allen Hutt wrote that the aim of 'educational' societies, as of sports clubs and works councils, was transparent: 'to turn the attention of the masses from the class struggle and from harbouring revolutionary thoughts.'¹⁴⁶ Wal Hannington, the leader of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), believed that the various social service centres demonstrated 'how craftily the ruling class, by evoking the sentiment of charity, have sought to cover up their sins and omissions in the treatment of the unemployed'; and were used to lure the unemployed away from militant organizations and lead them 'into the peaceful path of a social life which would sap their spirit of political activity and guide them into a state of complacency.'¹⁴⁷ This belief was confirmed by the open hostility of the management in most of the social service centres to NUWM 'trouble-makers',¹⁴⁸ though in some centres this hostility and the banning of extreme left-wing politicians was a result of them trying to seize control of meetings.¹⁴⁹ Hannington explained the use of the centres by the unemployed by the fact that the NUWM and the wider labour movement 'had almost completely neglected the work of providing a social life for the unemployed', but he dismissed the 'honoured gentlemen' of the NCSS on the grounds that they had never associated themselves with the demand for the abolition of the means test and the restoration of benefit cuts. Hannington declared that 'Any attempt to formulate a programme which avoids interference with capitalist interests is as good as useless from the start'.¹⁵⁰ James Hanley quoted an unemployed man in South Wales who said 'I reckon that if we had boycotted these social centres at first then they would have had to do something. It seems to me that so long as we are content to go to them, then nobody'll worry their heads.'¹⁵¹

Some Labour MPs adopted a similar stance in Parliament. Joseph Batey, the Labour MP for the Spennymoor division of Durham, was one such uncompromising critic, who told the Commons:

I say that the Government are simply using the National Council of Social Services and the personal Service League in order to justify doing nothing themselves [...]. Miners, as a rule, do not vote Tory, and, therefore, they are being left in the cold as far as this Government is concerned.¹⁵²

Orwell also argued that the centres were 'simply a device to keep the unemployed quiet and give them the illusion that something is being done for them', and that 'The Unemployed men who frequent them are mostly of the cap-touching type — the type who tells you oilily that he is "Temperance" and votes Conservative.' However, though he believed the best work for the unemployed was being done by the NUWM, he felt himself 'torn both ways' since the 'rubbish' that the centres offered was still probably better for the unemployed man 'than that for years upon end he should do absolutely nothing'.¹⁵³

Others attacked the voluntary movement for making little headway among the unemployed, and some explained this by referring — with varying degrees of precision — to the stages theory, implying that schemes to counteract apathy fell victim to it. *Men Without Work* emphasized that depression and apathy was at the root of most of the problems of the unemployed and was 'one of the reasons why the majority of them "have not the heart" for clubs or activities of other kinds'.¹⁵⁴ Some critics suggested different psychological causes for the reluctance of the unemployed to join and to continue attending. Beales and Lambert believed that, 'having been deceived on previous occasions by politicians' promises', the unemployed were suspicious; but also that 'Mending boots or digging allotments is by no means a substitute for those normal satisfactions of interests and hobbies which are the necessary antidote to the debilitating effect of modern industrial life'.¹⁵⁵ One psychologist considered that the apparently irrational behaviour of staying away was in fact an attempt by the unemployed to preserve self-respect since 'Patronising attitudes, particularly if they are associated with suggestions of "uplift" are resented, and expressions of sympathy usually arouse indignation'; while joining clubs 'might seem to them to imply that they have become resigned to unemployment and even have become unemployable'.¹⁵⁶ The honorary secretary of the Croydon Centre for Unemployed Men, by contrast, detected a certain bewilderment among the unemployed which meant that 'Men who time after time have said they enjoyed the last lecture have had to be persuaded to try the next, for titles seem to convey little to their imaginations'.¹⁵⁷

The opinions of the unemployed themselves are much more difficult to uncover; but a few views were published. They point to a lack of interest, disillusionment and suspicion. An unemployed man, who attended free classes, stated in a letter to *The Spectator* that '*the vast bulk of the Unemployed are not touched. They don't come [...]*. Moreover, the classes do not keep up their numbers, except in a few isolated cases [...]. What we unemployed could do with is a little less of education and a little more of entertainment'.¹⁵⁸ Ellis responded to this criticism by arguing that the writer had made a 'common error in regarding "the Unemployed" as a mass with common tastes and similar capacities'.¹⁵⁹ For an unemployed man in South Wales:

When they started this social service stunt I thought I might be useful when they started a centre here. You see, I've the qualifications for a teacher or warden, though I didn't manage to get a chance to study for my examinations [...]. I wrote saying I was qualified to look after men, I knew them all and their problems. But they didn't give me any job. Some young chap from Cambridge came down, got a nice salaried post. That puts your back up, you know.¹⁶⁰

An unemployed miner who was a member of the Spennymoor Settlement and addressed the BARS conference held in Durham in 1934, said that the chief difficulty for the settlement was 'convincing people that it is neither a Labour Camp nor a Bolshevik cell' and that it would be 'a long time before people give up the idea of a Soup Kitchen'.¹⁶¹ His wife, who also addressed the conference, said that:

The attitude of the unemployed in Durham towards Settlements and Social Service seems to be one of suspicion. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that they do not understand the aims and objects of the Settlement. Most people think they belong to some political party which has not the support of the Trade Unions!¹⁶²

The proximity of the Hamsterley 'labour camp' probably added credibility to their suspicion.¹⁶³ However, the refusal of the trade unions to co-operate with other bodies in schemes for the unemployed was probably a decisive factor in many places. The TUC declined to participate in government training centres,¹⁶⁴ or to co-operate with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement,¹⁶⁵ or even — for four years at any rate — to be involved in the creation of 'unemployed associations' for their own former members.¹⁶⁶ Unsurprisingly, therefore, in 1932 the TUC also decided not to associate with the National Council of Social Service in the creation of a National Joint Consultative Committee or to be associated with the WEA's celebrated Lincoln People's Service Club, since it was uncertain that these were not 'schemes for the production of goods in competition with those at present in the market'.¹⁶⁷

IV

There was plenty of speculation about the future of the clubs, centres and settlements in the 1930s. They had always nominally been for both the unemployed and employed.¹⁶⁸ However, in 1934, on the second anniversary of his celebrated Albert Hall speech calling on all those in work to 'play the part of neighbour and friend to the man out of work',¹⁶⁹ the Prince of Wales broadcast a further appeal for voluntary service in which he highlighted that membership of clubs should not be confined to the unemployed, for 'we must not let unemployed people feel that they need separate clubs'.¹⁷⁰ The Society of Friends emphasised that a club of the unemployed alone was bound to fail for they had to be able to participate 'in the normal life of the community and in its social activities',¹⁷¹ and some organizers believed that the clubs would 'eventually develop into social clubs used by employed as well as unemployed workers'.¹⁷² As well as the prospect of mechanization creating extensive technological unemployment, investigations pointed to there being, as a result of shorter hours and part-time employment, 'large numbers of employed with spare time on their hands'.¹⁷³

The commitment to full employment after the Second World War did not, therefore, undermine the *raison d'être* of the inter-war schemes. In any case, many feared that the post-war period would see intensified depression. The people of Spennymoor expected 'to see much worse industrial and social conditions after the war', and Farrell was preparing the settlement 'for a greater effort on our part to meet the greater needs of that time'.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, there were wartime experiments in creating additional 'clubs for

citizens', such as the fifty-seven war workers' clubs whose annual members' conference in 1943 sent a resolution to the government that these clubs should be part of 'the social amenities of every community' in the post-war reconstruction.¹⁷⁵ Many acknowledged that army education had 'greatly widened interest in adult education',¹⁷⁶ but also that unless organisations were ready to enthuse returning service men and women, 'another opportunity to begin to build "a world fit for heroes" will be missed.'¹⁷⁷ Concern that the apathy of the unemployed would undermine British democracy receded, but was to some extent replaced by other doubts about the future conduct of young working-class men who had experienced unemployment. A. J. Lush reported to the South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service in 1941 that what he found among young adults in the area were not only cynical attitudes towards political beliefs and an indifferent attitude to politics; but also:

a malaise that was deeper than either of these attitudes. It was the sense of conviction that for them political organisation had no meaning or purpose [...]. they will never be inspired by the belief that the political well-being of their country depends upon ideals and convictions.¹⁷⁸

Besides, nothing decisive had been done to address the need for the 'right use of leisure' and the lack of 'education for leisure' of the working class more generally. This continued to be a prominent theme in the public debate about post-war education.¹⁷⁹ Writing in 1940 in the Christian press, Fred Clarke, the Director of the Institute of Education in the University of London, saw 'continued' education as essential to enable everyone to attain 'a sufficiently high level of acquirement to participate with mutual advantage in the common culture'.¹⁸⁰ In 1945, in a report submitted to the Board of Education, the British Institute of Adult Education emphasized that in a mechanical age of 'monotonous and wearisome labour without joy or hope', 'the right employment of leisure' increased the will and the ability to work; and that democracy would succumb to 'the growing tendency to mass regimentation in one direction or another' if individuals were 'ill-informed or uninterested'.¹⁸¹ Reflecting on 'Education for a Civilised Democracy' in 1946, Sir Richard Livingstone, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, emphasised the need to extend adult education, especially of the WEA type, since the twentieth century was 'the century of the common man' but it was not certain that he was 'capable of making a great civilisation', that is, 'a community whose life throughout is first-rate'.¹⁸²

The voluntary adult education movement continued to enjoy the strong support — at least at the level of political rhetoric — of the state. The 1944 Education Act made local education authorities responsible for securing adequate provision for further education, including leisure-time occupation, and 'such organised cultural training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements' for persons over the school leaving age; and new grant regulations in 1946 enabled 'responsible bodies' to apply for grants from the Ministry of Education for a wide range of courses, including 'courses of less formal character'.¹⁸³ The Ministry of Education report on *Community Centres* in 1946 recommended an expansion of centres and placed the responsibility for their provision and maintenance on local education authorities.¹⁸⁴ The Labour MP John Parker wrote in *Labour Marches On* in 1947 that adult education would be further developed alongside youth groups and community centres with the building of county colleges to provide part-time schooling

for you people between fifteen and eighteen.¹⁸⁵ As a result, in 1944 the Spennymoor Settlement, which would lose its grant from the Pilgrim Trust at the end of the war, was confident that 'with all the current talk of Community Centres, Houses of Study, Peoples Colleges, and Adult education generally our Spennymoor and Durham authorities will look upon the Settlement as the nucleus for any such schemes they may have in view'.¹⁸⁶

These high hopes were unrealized. By 1949 economic problems meant that government proposals for county colleges were suspended indefinitely, all building for community centres was stopped and local education authorities were advised to increase the fees of evening class students. By 1951 local education authorities were being asked to consider 'making recreational classes self-supporting' and the Conservatives imposed a standstill on grant for responsible bodies for 1952–3.¹⁸⁷ In the case of Spennymoor, the settlement closed in 1954 after 'constantly recurring financial crises' and procrastination by the Durham County Council Education Committee in the post-war period.¹⁸⁸

V

The proponents of the new form of 'enforced leisure' described in this article saw leisure as potentially a blessing or a danger, depending on whether its 'right use' could be promoted among the working class. They saw capitalist development as extending not eroding leisure. What they did not see — or probably chose to ignore — was the fundamental importance of work to the self-identity and self-worth of workers. The economic historian William Woodruff recalled his unemployed father, a weaver in Blackburn, believing that 'everybody had a duty, as well as a right, to work. "We mun work," he'd say'.¹⁸⁹ But the centrality of work was often made explicit by supporters of the stages theory of unemployment. The fact that enthusiasts of 'enforced leisure' were also often supporters of the stages theory of unemployment made their discounting of work all the more striking. But it also led them to hold the contradictory views that leisure for the unemployed was dangerous unless disciplined by education, and that the unemployed were apathetic and so difficult to educate. These omissions and contradictions did not matter because the ideology served the interests of the key players.¹⁹⁰ For the National Government it further confirmed the folly of public works, while for the voluntary sector it brought grants from government and charitable trusts and gave its work prominence.

In truth, the danger of leisure — enforced or otherwise — was contained by the more reliable practice of opposing its extension: 'Great Britain Against Leisure', as a headline announced in the *New Statesman* in 1934.¹⁹¹ The following year, in his remarkable essay, 'In Praise of Idleness', Bertrand Russell imagined that 'If the ordinary wage-earner worked four hours a day, there would be enough for everybody, and no unemployment — assuming a certain very moderate amount of sensible organization'. But such a future disturbed the rich because 'The idea that the poor should have leisure has always been shocking to the rich'.¹⁹² Russell further opined: 'The evils of unemployment among wage-earners are generally recognized [...]. The unemployed rich are an evil of a different sort'.¹⁹³ In comparison, the evils of 'the idle rich'¹⁹⁴ went largely unexamined in this period.

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- ⁴ For example, A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1992, pp. 43-8, on the need to 'kill' time and the 'informal apartheid' which segregated the unemployed who had no money for leisure; Glyptis, *Leisure and Unemployment*, pp. 2-3, on leisure as the time leftover when the daily necessities of life have been met, a particular type of activity or an attitude of mind or a quality of experience; C. Rojek, *Leisure and Culture*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, pp. 3, 17-22, on leisure as 'status-positioning behaviour', on typologies of 'serious' and 'casual' and 'fast' and 'slow' leisure and on the 'strong transgressive element' in leisure which 'enables us to objectify the rules and mores of everyday life and subject them to critical appraisal'; Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture*, pp. 2-8, on leisure as an activity that has no 'use' value beyond personal satisfaction and pleasure, bestows meaning to people's lives, is creative and conventionally assumes a male orientation.
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- ³⁶ E. W. Bakke, *The Unemployed Man: A Social Study*, London, Nisbet, 1933, p. 236.
- ³⁷ P. Gibbs, *Ordeal in England*, London, Heinemann, 1937, p. 383.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 218–9.
- ³⁹ P. Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years*, London, Heinemann, 1946, pp. 407, 408.
- ⁴⁰ W. Temple, 'Preface', in Newsom, *Out of the Pit*, p. ix.
- ⁴¹ L. Clark (ed.), *The Kingdom of the Mind: Essays and Addresses, 1903–37, of Albert Mansbridge*, London, J. M. Dent, 1944, p. 171.
- ⁴² Beales and Lambert, *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, p. 7.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–6; ch. 24 for the memoir of a young electrician turned burglar; Appendix B, 'The Psychology of the Unemployed from the Medical Point of View'. See also *Men Without Work*, pp. 129–36, on 'nerves' and 'psycho-neurotic' symptoms.
- ⁴⁴ Newsom, *Out of the Pit*, pp. 47, 48.
- ⁴⁵ Society of Friends, 'Unemployment Is Beating Us'. *Is It Our Concern?: A Series of Letters*, H. B. Pointing (ed.), London, 1934, pp. 34–5.
- ⁴⁶ Bakke, *The Unemployed Man*, p. 59.
- ⁴⁷ *Unemployment and the Child*, p. 33.
- ⁴⁸ Priestley, *English Journey*, p. 321. But a series of articles in *The Times* on Durham's derelict areas did make a national impact: R. Middleton, 'Unemployment in the North East during the interwar period', in R. A. Chapman (ed.), *Public Policy Studies: The North East of England*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1985, p. 33.
- ⁴⁹ Middleton, 'Unemployment in the North East', pp. 24, 25; N. McCord and R. Thompson, *The Northern Counties from A.D. 1000*, London, Longman, 1998, pp. 366–7.
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⁵⁵ Ministry of Labour, *Reports of Investigations*, p. 69.

⁵⁶ NCSS, *Unemployment and Community Service*, London, 1936, p. 7.

⁵⁷ ‘Review: Time to Spare by Eleven Unemployed’, *New Statesman and Nation*, 9 March 1935, p. 332.

⁵⁸ Beales and Lambert, *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, pp. 32–3.

⁵⁹ Mais, *England’s Character*, p. 111; also, S. P. B. Mais, *S.O.S. Talks on Unemployment*, London, 1933, pp. xxiii–40, ch. 5.

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⁶¹ Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 75.

⁶² H. Ellis, *Questions of Our Day*, London, 1936, p. 47.

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⁶⁶ As summarized in *Men Without Work*, p. 75, ch. 9.

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⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 201. See also Ministry of Labour, *Reports of Investigations*, p. 105; *Report of the Unemployment Assistance Board for the Year Ended 31st. December, 1936*, Cmd. 5526, London, HMSO, 1937, pp. 48–51; *Report of the Unemployment Assistance Board for the Year Ended 31st. December, 1937*, Cmd. 5752, London, HMSO, 1938, pp. 34–41; “‘Utilise the land” and help to better the conditions of the “Depressed Areas””, *Public Opinion*, 16 November 1934, p. 471; H. Jennings, *The New Community*, London, 1934, p. 11. On how Homecrofting groups could save industry: J. W. Scott, *Self-Subsistence for the Unemployed: Studies in a New Technique*, London, Faber, 1935, esp. chs 2, 3 and 6; ‘Review of Self-Subsistence for the Unemployed: Studies in a New Technique by J. W. Scott’, *Social Science Review*, 16, 1935, pp. 34–5.

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- ⁷⁸ P. Gibbs, *Ways of Escape*, London, Heinemann, 1933, p. 114.
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- ⁸² Dennison, *Location of Industry*, p. 76; C. G. Renold, 'The present position of skill in industry', *Economic Journal*, 38, 1928, pp. 593–604.
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¹⁰⁹ 'The voluntary movement in Great Britain in 1937', NCVO, Box 4, D11/421, p. 1.

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- ¹⁶² 'Unemployment: by an unemployed miner's wife', p. 43.
- ¹⁶³ 'Jobless "hardened" in labour camps. A brutal experiment involving 200,000 men which ran for 10 years before the second world war', *The Guardian*, 12 August 1998; 'A forgotten scheme for unemployed Durham miners in the 1930s', *Northern Echo*, 12 January 2000.
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- ¹⁶⁵ *TUC Annual Report, 1928*, p. 113. The NUWM was also ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party: *Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1930*, pp. 34–7; *Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1933*, p. 30.
- ¹⁶⁶ *TUC Annual Report, 1928*, pp. 111, 311, 313; *TUC Annual Report, 1929*, p. 99; *TUC Annual Report, 1932*, p. 122, on the adoption of unemployed associations; *TUC Annual Report, 1933*, p. 120, on the formation of 120 unemployed associations.
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- ¹⁷⁰ 'Unemployment and voluntary service by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales', *Social Science Review*, 15, 1934, p. 21; 'A new spirit of fellowship', *The Times*, 29 Jan. 1934.
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- ¹⁷⁴ 'The Spennymoor Settlement 9th. Annual Report 1940. Typescript', SSP, 1/4, pp. 1, 4. In 1946 the industrial situation in Spennymoor did not improve, and low unemployment was not achieved until 1947: '15th. Annual Report 1946', p. 3; '16th. Annual Report 1947', SSP, 1/5, p. 1.
- ¹⁷⁵ M. Nicholson, *Clubs for Citizens: A Wartime Experiment*, London, 1945, pp. 12–15, 22–3.
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- ¹⁸⁰ F. Clarke, *Education and Social Change: An English Interpretation*, London, 1940, pp. 58, 59.
- ¹⁸¹ *Adult Education After the War: A Report of an Enquiry Made for the British Institute of Adult Education*, London, 1945, pp. vii, 6.
- ¹⁸² R. Livingstone, *Some Tasks For Education*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1946, pp. 51, 52, 64; R. Livingstone, *Education For A World Adrift*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1943, p. x, charging the working class with wanting more education; but not asking what it was to teach. See also R. Livingstone, 'Preface', in M. Forster, *Schools for Life: A Study of the People's Colleges in Sweden*, London, Faber, 1944, p. 5, for his admiration of the People's Colleges in Sweden and Denmark.
- ¹⁸³ Kelly, *History of Adult Education*, p. 337.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 338. The White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction* in 1943 and the Ministry of Education pamphlet on *Further Education* in 1947 also recommended the expansion of community centres.
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¹⁸⁸ 'The Spennymoor Settlement 21st Annual Report 1952', SSP, 1/5, p. 13; W. G. Farrell to J. J. Mallon, 12 March 1952, SSP, 3/1/3; W. G. Farrell to The Director of Education, Durham County Council, 30 December 1953, SSP, 3/2; Assistant Director of Education to W. G. Farrell, 28 January 1954, SSP, 3/2.

¹⁸⁹ W. Woodruff, *The Road to Nab End: A Lancashire Childhood*, London, Eland, 2000, p. 42. See also Jones, *Workers at Play*, pp. 114–15 on the 'work ethic'; and Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 31 on male pride in being a 'breadwinner' and 'good provider'.

¹⁹⁰ D. King, *In the Name of Liberalism: Illiberal Social Policy in the United States and Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 178–9, demonstrated a comparable lack of rigour behind the decision to establish work camps in Britain. King concludes that views about the need to 'toughen up' the unemployed 'rested more on anecdotal sources than systematic data collection', while the work camps were 'pragmatic experiments, implemented with strikingly little knowledge.'

¹⁹¹ 'Great Britain against leisure', *New Statesman and Nation*, 19 May 1934, p. 755.

¹⁹² B. Russell, *In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1935, pp. 18, 17. For like-minded contemporaries, see Jones, *Workers at Play*, p. 131.

¹⁹³ Russell, *In Praise of Idleness*, pp. 136, 137.

¹⁹⁴ K. Clark, *Another Part of the Wood*, London, Coronet, 1986, p. 9, for his celebrated remark about his parents.

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